

Grow Your Own Avocado Tree!

A good friend called me the other day and asked if I knew how to sprout an avocado seed pit. She refuses to enter the computer world, so I searched the internet for an answer. This is a fun family project or even an excellent classroom learning opportunity. Find more resources at the Kids Gardening website.

Here's how to do it:

- **Prepare the Pit.**

1. First, wash the avocado seed pit completely. Clean off all of the pulp. Dry the pit well with clean paper toweling. Stick three or four sturdy wooden toothpicks deep into the pit.
2. Fill a glass jar with clear lukewarm tap water. Suspend the pit in the glass, with the rounded end pointing upwards. (The flatter end of the pit will sit in the water).
3. Place the glass in a warm spot. Avoid placing it in direct sunlight. Check it daily to make sure the water level is high enough. The bottom of the avocado pit should always be submerged.

- **Watch it Grow.**

1. Within two to three weeks, you will begin to see roots appearing under the avocado pit. After a month or so, you may see a brand-new stem sprouting from the top.
2. As leaves begin to appear, you will want to pinch these off gently and discard them. This will encourage the avocado plant to grow a stronger stem and well-established root system.

- **Pot Your New Plant.**

1. When the stem reaches 6" to 8" in height, you can pot your avocado tree. Fill a 10" clay or terra cotta pot with rich potting soil. Gently place the avocado plant into the soil. Cover half of the pit with additional soil. Be sure to leave the top half still exposed.
2. Place your avocado plant in a sunny, warm spot.

- **Water It Often.**

Water your avocado plant frequently, keeping the soil damp but not sloppy wet. If the plant's leaves begin to turn yellow, reduce watering.

- **Wait For Results.**

Most avocado plants require six to twelve years of growth before they flourish sufficiently to bear fruit. Still, you can enjoy a lovely plant and feel the satisfaction of cultivating and planting it yourself!

Kitchen scrap gardening is when you grow plants from items you would normally throw in your compost bucket. Kids love this idea, and it's a great way to reinforce the sustainable living concepts of recycling and reusing.

Scout your kitchen and refrigerator for potential vegetable and fruit candidates. Some of the best are oranges, lemons, limes, sweet potatoes, avocados, carrots, beets, onions, and ginger.

Citrus seeds are easy to grow into new houseplants. Fill a 4 inch diameter pot with moistened potting soil. Remove whole seeds from the fruit and plant three to four of them one inch deep in the pot. The seeds should sprout in two to four weeks. Keep the seedlings well-watered for about 6 weeks and then transplant individual trees into bigger pots.

Ginger is particularly fun to grow because both the cut ends and the glossy new leaves (when crushed) emit a strong gingery aroma. Suspend a chunk of ginger with toothpicks over a glass of water or place it in a container of moistened potting soil. If using the water method, transfer the new plant to a container of potting soil once roots appear.

You can force many root crops (beets, parsnips, and carrots) to sprout new top growth by "beheading" them. Kids love the chopping part. Slice off the head end along with one to two inches of the root and place it in a saucer filled with pebbles for support and water. In a week or so new greens should appear from the top. Then snug the root into a container filled with potting soil.

Since it's too cold to garden outside, gather some of your kitchen scraps and a young gardener and start planting!